

What We Mean by Greenways

Greenways are connections between people and places, both cooperative agreements among neighboring communities and paths where the natural and human landscapes coincide.

Greenways are most often identified with trails or open space corridors. Trails are certainly Greenways, but so are sidewalk systems along tree-lined main streets, country roads through farmlands, safe and pleasant bike routes, and waterways with access points for fishing and floating small boats. Even a highway commercial district can be part of a Greenway, if it is built as a tree-lined boulevard rather than a linear strip of parking lots and pole signs.

In many ways we have always been a Greenway place. Dutchess County began as a network of trails through the wilderness. For centuries the Hudson River and other major waterways served as the regional routes for transportation and economic activities. From the early 1800s on, open farmland dominated the landscape. City neighborhoods, villages, and hamlets were closely centered around convenient walking distances. Early 20th century post cards show village center streets and country roads from Red Hook to Pawling shaded with overarching trees.

Design principles that emphasize trail connections, waterway access, farmland and open space protection, tree-lined streets, and compact walkable centers are based on traditional settlement patterns embedded in the area's history and landscape.

Greenway policies place value on historic patterns distinctive to this region, but they also serve as a guide to integrating natural and rural landscapes with new development. Thinking about the future in the Greenway context encourages us to consider common problems and possible connections in regional terms. In this sense, cooperative agreements among Dutchess County communities are also forms of Greenway Connections.

